



Course Description – Example (Best Practice)

Organizational matters

Classroom language:	English
Event type:	Seminar
Semester-week-hours:	2
Target group	MSc students (complementary study) & PhD

Content

The course exposes students to foundational and current management and organization theories. The topics of this course are organized along key themes and challenges of organizational life, such as formal vs informal organizing, power and politics in organizations or changing institutional demands. Initially, traditional and more recent perspectives on organizations and organizing are introduced. Finally, the course will also attend to moral and ethical issues of organizing and digital and algorithmic organizational forms and practices.

Goal

Professional competence:

The students

- gain a deeper theoretical knowledge about management and organization theories relevant for understanding both organizational life in practice and broader societal developments
- become familiar with different kinds of organizations, their structures and practices, and their role in society
- develop the conceptual competence to apply these theories to different managerial situations
- become able to critically engage in current debates about management and organization theories and their impact on the organization of economic actions
- understand the relevance of theory to make sense of empirical problems
- develop critical thinking as well as presentation skills

Personal competence:

The students

- gain theoretical knowledge as a basis for a possible Phd or during their PhD
- reflect on how to evaluate their own work and provide feedback to others in a constructive and critical manner



- gain practical insights into organizational life and learn to navigate various professional contexts

Assessment

Assessment consists of three parts:

- 1. Individual and group presentations (50%)**
 - a. Contribute to group presentation on theory perspective in classes 2 & 3
 - b. Introduce readings to class individually – **no more than 10 minutes!** No powerpoint presentation is required, but please provide a 1 page handout via uploading on Mystudy and speak freely. Presentations and handout should:
 - i. Summarize the core arguments.
 - ii. Try to link the article to a particular theoretical perspective and understanding of organizations.
 - iii. End with a question that you do not understand about the text and want to discuss further.
- 2. Participation in class discussions (25%):** Students come prepared and participate in joint discussions based on the required readings for these joint discussions (see below).
- 3. Written assignment under supervision (25%):** Students will write a short assignment at the end of the semester in class. In the assignment, a question similar to the joint discussion questions will be asked. The assignment will be based mostly on the group readings and joint discussions. Further information will be given in class.

Teaching and learning formats

The main didactical foundation of this course is self-study mixed with classroom discussions as it is typical for a seminar. Over the course of the semester, students will introduce particular theoretical perspectives based on their readings, engage in joint discussions and interpretations, and reflect critically about the practical relevance of particular theoretical concepts. Students are expected to arrive well prepared at each session to enable an interactive mode of learning.

Use of AI

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools that can summarize and produce texts are now widely accessible. The use of AI-based applications is only partially permissible in the process of scientific research. Handing in machine-generated work as your own is a violation of academic integrity in the same way as plagiarism or other forms of authorship fraud. If you submit an assignment produced by an AI content generation tool without explicitly stating



the tool use, you infringe good academic conduct. The same applies to presentations and summaries.

I have little tolerance for AI-generated, unchecked, superficial contributions in all assessment categories.

Regarding this course, I do not recommend replacing own reading of articles with AI-generated summaries. If you do use a tool to help you understand and summarize the text, I only recommend using such a summary as a starting point to then be followed up by your own reading, or to use it as a sparring partner to aid your understanding. Ultimately, there is no “one right way” of understanding and summarizing a text. Furthermore, AI is prone to hallucinations and highly general and superficial, often wrong statements if not prompted properly. You must take responsibility for all the content you present in class. This also means checking on any information provided by AI.

AI can be of help for anyone who has a good knowledge base and interacts with the tool to improve ones own thinking or presentation of thoughts. AI should be used to enhance, not replace your thinking. I encourage you to critically ask yourself where you can deal with a given task yourself, or whether you need to prompt an AI tool for help. Retaining own thinking capacity also helps to avoid building up too much cognitive debt (<https://arxiv.org/abs/2506.08872>).

A summary of our current guidance can be found here:

https://www.leuphana.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Forschungseinrichtungen/imo/personen/schuessler_elke/files/Abschlussarbeiten/The_use_of_AI_in_academic_writing_v7.pdf



Class schedule and readings

Pre-reading	Grey, C. (2022). <i>A very short, fairly interesting and reasonably cheap book about studying organizations</i> (5th ed.). Sage.
	Block A: Foundations
	1. Why study organizations? Why management and organization theories? Important readings on organizations and management: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Perrow, C. (1973). The short and glorious history of organizational theory. <i>Organizational Dynamics</i>, 2(1), 3–15.• Perrow, C. (1991). A society of organizations. <i>Theory and Society</i>, 20(6), 725–62.• Djelic, M. L. (2016). History of management—what is the future for research on the past? In B. Czarniavska (Ed.), <i>A research agenda for management and organization studies</i> (pp. 1-10). Edward Elgar Publishing. Relevant readings on theories: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Abend, G. (2008). The meaning of ‘theory’. <i>Sociological Theory</i>, 26(2), 173–199.• Reihlen, M., Klaas-Wissing, T., & Ringberg, T. (2007). Metatheories in management studies: Reflections upon individualism, holism, and systemism. <i>M@n@gement</i>, 10(3), 49–69.• Sandberg, J., & Alvesson, M. (2021). Meanings of theory: Clarifying theory through typification. <i>Journal of Management Studies</i>, 58(2), 487–516.
	2. What are organizations? From organizations as a noun to organizing as a verb and organization as an adjective You will be divided into six theory groups. Make sure you meet in your group, divide up your readings and be prepared to discuss “your” respective theoretical perspective in class:



a) Economic and behavioral perspective

- Coase, R. H. (1937). The nature of the firm. *Economia*, 4(16), 386–405.
- Simon, H. (1997). *Administrative behavior* (4th ed.). Free Press. Chapter 5: The psychology of administrative decisions, 92–117.

b) Systems perspective

- Seidl, D., & Mormann, H. (2014). Niklas Luhmann as organization theorist. In P. Adler, P. du Gay, G. Morgan & M. Reed (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of sociology, social theory, and organization studies: Contemporary currents* (pp. 125–157). Oxford Academic.
- Czarniawska, B. (2017). Bruno Latour and Niklas Luhmann as organization theorists. *European Management Journal*, 35(2), 145–150.

c) Practice perspective

- Feldman, M., & Worline, M. (2016). The practicability of practice theory. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 15(2), 304–324.
- Nicolini, D., & Monteiro, P. (2017). The practice approach: For a praxeology of organisational and management studies. In A. Langley & H. Tsoukas (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of process organization studies* (pp. 110–126). Sage.

d) Process perspective

- Tsoukas, H., & Chia, R. (2002). On organizational becoming: Rethinking organizational change. *Organization Science*, 13(5), 567–582.
- Weick, K. E., Sutcliffe, K. M., & Obstfeld, D. (2005). Organizing and the process of sensemaking. *Organization Science*, 16(4), 409–421.



	<p>e) Organizationality perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Ahrne, G., & Brunsson, N. (2019). Organization unbound. In G. Ahrne & N. Brunsson (Eds.), <i>Organization outside organizations: The abundance of partial organization in social life</i> (pp. 3–36). Cambridge University Press.Dobusch, L., & Schoeneborn, D. (2015). Fluidity, identity, and organizationality: The communicative constitution of Anonymous. <i>Journal of Management Studies</i>, 52(8), 1005–1035. <p>f) A special form of organizationality: Organized anarchies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Cohen, M. D., March, J. G., & Olsen, J. P. (1972). A garbage can model of organizational choice. <i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>, 17(1), 1–25.Lipson, M. (2007). A "garbage can model" of UN peacekeeping. <i>Global Governance</i>, 13, 79.
	<p>Group work and presentations theoretical perspectives</p> <p>Joint discussion: Where and what is the organization in the respective theoretical perspective? To which metatheoretical perspective do they fit? Which perspective did you find most useful to understand a practical problem?</p>
Block B: Core questions of organizing	
	<p>3. The power and perils of formal organization(s) – Bureaucracy and beyond</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Monteiro, P., & Adler, P. S. (2022). Bureaucracy for the 21st century: Clarifying and expanding our view of bureaucratic organization. <i>Academy of Management Annals</i>, 16(2), 427–475.2) Perrow, C. (1986). <i>Complex organizations: A critical essay</i>. Random House. Chapter 1: Why bureaucracy? 1–48.3) Clegg, S. R. (2012). The end of bureaucracy? <i>Research in the Sociology of Organizations</i>, 35, 59–84.



	<p>4. The tyranny of informality?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">4) Freeman, J. (1972). The tyranny of structurelessness. <i>Berkeley Journal of Sociology</i>, 17, 151–164.5) Hodgson, D., & Briand, L. (2013). Controlling the uncontrollable: ‘Agile’ teams and illusions of autonomy in creative work. <i>Work, Employment and Society</i>, 27(2), 308–325.6) Sturdy, A., Wright, C., & Wylie, N. (2016). Managers as consultants: The hybridity and tensions of neo-bureaucratic management. <i>Organization</i>, 23(2), 184–205. <p>Joint discussion: What is your association with bureaucracies? Which arguments from Grey (2022) Ch. 1 did you find surprising or novel?</p>
	<p>5: Culture and control in organizations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">7) Endrissat, N., Islam, G., & Noppeney, C. (2015). Enchanting work: New spirits of service work in an organic supermarket. <i>Organization Studies</i>, 36(11), 1555–1576.8) Fleming, P., & Sturdy, A. (2011). ‘Being yourself’ in the electronic sweatshop: New forms of normative control. <i>Human Relations</i>, 64(2), 177–200.9) Costas, J. (2012). “We are all friends here”: Reinforcing paradoxes of normative control in a culture of friendship. <i>Journal of Management Inquiry</i>, 21(4), 377–395. <p>Joint discussion: What did you find interesting or surprising in Grey (2022) Ch. 3 regarding culture? How is organizational culture expressed and managed? What does Grey criticize regarding culture management?</p>
	<p>6. Managing organizational change</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">10) Weick, K. E., & Quinn, R. E. (1999). Organizational change and development. <i>Annual Review of Psychology</i>, 50(1), 361–386.11) Feldman, M. S., & Pentland, B. T. (2003). Reconceptualizing organizational routines as a source of flexibility and change. <i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>, 48(1), 94–118.



	<p>12) Sydow, J., Schreyögg, G., & Koch, J. (2009). Organizational path dependence: Opening the black box. <i>Academy of Management Review</i>, 34(4), 689–709.</p> <p>Joint discussion: What is the relationship between stability and change in organizations? Why does Grey (2022), Ch. 4 argue that change management is bound to fail?</p>
	<p>7. Power and politics in organizations</p> <p>13) Burns, T. (1961). Micropolitics: Mechanisms of institutional change. <i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>, 6(3), 257–281.</p> <p>14) Emerson, R.M. (1962). Power-dependence relations. <i>American Sociological Review</i>, 27(1), 31–41.</p> <p>15) Hardy, C., & Clegg, S. R. (1999). Some dare call it power. In S. R. Clegg & C. Hardy (Eds.), <i>Studying organization: Theory and method</i> (pp. 368–387). Sage.</p> <p>Joint discussion: You want to change an organization towards a more sustainable business model – which actions do you take? What might be barriers hindering your progress? Which organization theories that you have learned so far can you draw on to derive strategies and tactics? As preparation, read one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ashford, S. J., & Detert, J. (2015). Get the boss to buy in. <i>Harvard Business Review</i>, 93(1/2), 72–79.• Wickert, C., & de Bakker, F. G. (2019). How CSR managers can inspire other leaders to act on sustainability. <i>Harvard Business Review</i>, 10.
	<p>Block C: Organizations and society</p>
	<p>8. Institutional influences on organizations</p> <p>16) DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. <i>American Sociological Review</i>, 48(2), 147–160.</p>



	<p>17) Meyer, J. W., & Rowan, B. (1977). Institutionalized organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony. <i>American Journal of Sociology</i>, 83(2), 340–363.</p> <p>18) Greenwood, R., Díaz, A. M., Li, S. X., & Lorente, J. C. (2010). The multiplicity of institutional logics and the heterogeneity of organizational responses. <i>Organization Science</i>, 21(2), 521–539.</p> <p>Joint discussion: Which institutions have shaped contemporary organizations according to Grey, Ch. 5? Conversely, how do work and organization feed back into societal structures? How is the institution of management changing?</p>
	<p>9. Paradoxes resulting from conflicting demands</p> <p>19) Gaim, M., Clegg, S., & Cunha, M. P. (2021). Managing impressions rather than emissions: Volkswagen and the false mastery of paradox. <i>Organization Studies</i>, 42(6), 949–970.</p> <p>20) Smith, W. K., & Lewis, M. W. (2011). Toward a theory of paradox: A dynamic equilibrium model of organizing. <i>Academy of Management Review</i>, 36(2), 381–403.</p> <p>21) Seidemann, I. (2024). Blinded by the Light: A critique on the universality, normativity, and hegemony of paradox theory and research. <i>Organization Theory</i>, 5(4), in print.</p> <p>10. Digital organizing: Algorithmic bureaucracies and platform organizations</p> <p>22) Kirchner, S., & Schübler, E. (2019). The organization of digital marketplaces: Unmasking the role of internet platforms in the sharing economy. In G. Ahrne & N. Brunsson (Eds.), <i>Organization outside organizations: The abundance of partial organization in social life</i> (pp. 131–154). Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>23) Cameron, L. D. (2022). “Making out” while driving: Relational and efficiency games in the gig economy. <i>Organization Science</i>, 33(1), 231–252.</p> <p>24) Rahman, H. A. (2021). The invisible cage: Workers’ reactivity to opaque algorithmic evaluations. <i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>, 66(4), 945–988.</p>



	<p>Joint discussion: The institutional environment of organizations is changing. How, as a leader, would you manage conflicting demands and a polarized public, e.g. regarding climate change?</p>
	<p>11. Organizational agency and actorhood in the age of AI</p> <p>25) Anthony, C., Bechky, B. A., & Fayard, A. L. (2023). “Collaborating” with AI: Taking a system view to explore the future of work. <i>Organization Science</i>, 34(5), 1672–1694.</p> <p>26) Van Rijmenam, M., & Logue, D. (2021) Revising the ‘science of the organisation’: Theorising AI agency and actorhood. <i>Innovation</i>, 23(1), 127–144.</p> <p>27) Fisher, D., & Fleming, P. (2025). Competing with smart machines: the dark side of ‘conjoined agency’ in contemporary organizations. <i>Organization Studies</i>, 01708406251391972.</p> <p>28)</p> <p>Joint discussion: How does algorithmic and digital organizing change fundamental understandings of organizations and organizing? Which theoretical perspectives (sessions 2 & 3) and which topics do you find most relevant for understanding this change?</p>
	<p>12. Performativity and ideology of management theory</p> <p>29) Battilana, J., Beckman, C. M., & Yen, J. (2025). On democratic organizing and organization theory. <i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>, 70(2), 297–327.</p> <p>30) Palazzo, G. (2023). From Übermensch to Uber-man. https://guidopalazzo.com/from-ubermensch-to-uber-man/</p> <p>Joint discussion: Why do we need to reconceptualize corporate actors? How should we construct the responsibility of corporate actors? How does digital organizing change corporate actorhood and responsibility? Based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Haase, M., Schuessler, E., Schmiel, U., Ortmann, G., Suchanek, A., & Schoeneborn, D. (2025). The past, present and future of the corporate actor: Ontological, epistemological and theoretical considerations. <i>Schmalenbach Journal of Business Research</i>, 1–38.
	<p>Written assignment under supervision & Feedback</p>